

January 6, 2015

Jeremy Ginsberg
Planning and Zoning Director
Darien Town Hall
Darien, CT 06820

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for giving the Darien Land Trust the opportunity to contribute our commentary to the update of the Darien Plan of Conservation and Development. We have reviewed the 2006 Plan and agree with most of its policies and recommendations, particularly those referencing the Darien Land Trust and the importance of preservation of Open Space for the Town of Darien.

Land Use recommendations that were included in the 2006 Plan pertaining to Open Space should all continue to be implemented. This includes a renewed effort to work with the Darien Land Trust to preserve more open space as opportunities arise. As part of this, Darien Land Trust would be happy to work with the Town to generate an improved catalogue of Town-held open space in order to create a complete map of open space in Darien, including conservation easements. This can be combined with Darien Land Trust's existing catalogues/maps and would enhance the Town's and Darien Land Trust's ability to prioritize land conservation efforts.

Other open space issues that relate to the Darien Land Trust include our ability to increase the pace and improve the quality of open space preserved. We would hope that the revised Plan would be able to address some of these issues:

- 1) How to best to position the Town and other Open Space-oriented organizations to respond in a timely fashion when new opportunities arise, including potential "fast-track" political approval processes.
- 2) How best to finance future acquisitions in public/private partnership with the Darien Land Trust, including the evaluation of a conveyance tax or annual budgetary set-asides.
- 3) Evaluate the Town's existing open space inventory for both its ecological values and the quality of its stewardship, particularly with respect to invasive plants.
- 4) Update the Town's existing subdivision open space set-aside policies to increase the percentage set-aside required and/or require a minimum set -aside size (small set-asides are of marginal ecological value and create stewardship

and monitoring headaches). Consider creating a fund to receive payments in lieu of set-aside to be used for critical Open Space preservation.

5) Evaluate the long-term impact on Darien's coastal Open Spaces of potential long-term sea level rise, particularly at the two Town beaches. As background to this point, we have recently received a study from the Nature Conservancy that suggests that the sea level rise by 2080 could pose significant flooding challenges for most of low-lying Darien. The Darien Land Trust properties in Tokeneke and the Town's two beaches are some of the most susceptible groups of properties. We'd be happy to discuss this point in more detail with you.

We look forward to attending the Conservation Planning session on January 13th. Please contact me if you have further questions,

Shirley Nichols,
Executive Director